1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

121 be recognized. *First*, there is a sympathetic but entirely unsystematic use of the culture in question which collects folk-lore,
177 customs, or other single items to use them as illustrations, as lesson or sermon material, &c., but without reference to their context in the fabric or pattern of the culture. *Second*, there is an attempt to rebuild those functions or institutions which *a priori* are judged essential and to leave untouched those judged unessential. Still, whatever is done, is done without reference to the pattern of the culture in question and the criteria are predetermined. *The third method* is that advocated by the present study. It begins with a systematic study of the culture in question, especially its characteristic patterns of behaviour, significant attitudes, beliefs and customs; and the effect of its contact with other cultures; in order

To determine and describe the content;

To analyse and evaluate this content with reference to its bearing upon present local needs; and

To make suggestions for tentative procedures which shall build upon indigenous patterns of behaviour, make adjustment to approved attitudes from the outside as easy as possible, and work toward a continuous and self-functioning process of self-adjustment.

The view-point assumed is a composite of practical anthropology, progressive education, and the newer approach to Christian missions. The criteria have been evolved in part through a study of the local situation and its needs.

127 *Sources.* More documentary material has been sifted than the references indicate. The historical account which has finally been incorporated as Chapter XII was written before the main part of this study and served as an important part of its background.

128 The chief sources, however, are original materials descriptive of
124 certain phases of Umbundu life and culture—materials gathered on the field over a period of years, especially between 1933 and 1938. Much of it consists of traditional 'literature' (folk-tales, proverbs, riddles and songs). More of it, however, consists of descriptions of customs, beliefs, institutions and other culture traits secured from personal observation, from descriptions by natives, from schedules collected and written up by trained natives, and Umbundu autobiographical data. Much of this is given in direct translation, certain parts in summary or by reference, while the rest has served as background.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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for individuals to build up large villages—thus Simbwyikoka encouraged people to settle at Mwekalia to make it a large village. It may also be suggested that the power of the village headmen was to some extent linked with the power of the chief, since the headmen were associated politically with the chief, and would from this, tend to gain authority in their dealings with their fellow villagers. The village headmen also lacked any real competition from other types of leadership. Mbati had kept relations with the post in his own hands, and there were therefore no government headmen. The first catechist had arrived in Mbati's village in 1928, but cannot have met with much lasting success as there are few baptized Christians over thirty-five in Gumba.

Other factors at the time strengthening the position of the village headmen were the low rate of labour migration[10] and the fact that practically every man over forty at the time of Simbwyikoka's accession had participated in the rubber trade. This meant that many of the best known caravan leaders were still in full vigour, and enjoyed a prestige based on the first-hand knowledge of the middle-aged and older men.

Between this period of the middle thirties and the beginning of my own fieldwork twenty years had passed and many changes had taken place. The status of the chief had sharply declined and he was now assisted by the four government headmen. Every village except the chief's village had a Catholic or Protestant catechist, and there had been a marked trend towards learning catechism in preparation for baptism, which had begun about 1946. Hence the catechetical school was usually attended by the majority of under twenty-five's in the village.

Agnatic kinship had ceased to be the principle of village membership. Nor can it be said that headmen build up villages by getting people to settle at a particular spot. It is not always easy even to find the headman, village population is not very stable, and a man can settle with any category of kin.

To discover the traditional headman required careful phrasing of questions. When I visited a village and asked for the *esekulu yimbo* (the traditional phrase for the village headman) I

[10] Ibid., p. 214.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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might be told that he lived elsewhere. This would turn out to be a reference to the government headman. A request for the *asekulu* (literally elder father, hence elder or headman) might also bring me in contact with the 'elder of the school', the representative of the local Christians. I therefore began to ask for 'the old one' (*ukulu*), or to inquire 'Who built first?' or 'Who settles disputes?', when I wanted to find out who was the traditional headman.

Even these questions did not necessarily get a clear answer. Thus the village of Kamupa had been founded by Lusase, its government headman was Guilherme, and, as neither of these was living near, minor disputes were referred to two old men who lived in the village. Apart from the government headmen, there are also traditional headmen recognized by the post, who did not have the privileges and the duties of the former. It may happen in a particular village that the man recognized as traditional headman by the post is not the same person as the real traditional headman recognized by the village. This was the case in Epalanga, where Sapapula was unquestionably the headman recognized by the villagers but the duties of dealing with policemen fell to Luanga. In the local discussions as to the recruitment of road-workers, and so on, Sapapula had much more influence than Luanga.

The position of the traditional headman nowadays lacks clearly defined powers, or symbolic value. A village is frequently known by its founder's name. The headman is the only person who can speak of 'my village' as opposed to 'our village'.[19] The firing of the long grass in the dry season which marks the beginning of the great communal hunts is theoretically begun by the village headman, though this is not always adhered to in practice. The headman does not take any active part in leading the hunt, nor are the people who go on a communal hunt necessarily confined to the inhabitants of one village. He has 'to show land' to new-comers to the village. This reflects a moral responsibility to his people rather than control of land tenure, since there is always spare land away from the villages which anybody can cultivate. He also has the responsibility of hearing minor disputes. He receives from the

[19] Ibid., pp. 56–57.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
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and wage labour which I have described as affecting the Ovimbundu as a whole.

It is not easy to compose budgets of household expenditure and income, partly because they have not yet much of a 'book-keeping' outlook, and partly because they suspect the motives behind questions of this sort. My own opinion is that from agriculture the average household would earn considerably less than 1,000 escudos (£12. 10s.) a year. The Banco de Angola in its Report for 1955[1] gives a budget for an African family at Silva Porto, consisting of father, mother, and two young children, having agriculture as their only source of income. Their total yearly income is given as 7,750 escudos (about £96. 17s. 6d.). Even allowing for the higher prices paid for crops on the railway line, an income of this order is far above anything earned by the average cultivating household, though it might be earned by the few men who cultivated coffee extensively and lived in Portuguese style.

Some details of the economic life of individuals may give depth to this chapter. Kambungo, a kinsman of Sapapula living in Menga, was a man of over sixty who had in his youth travelled on the caravans. He had a large house but lived in a village amongst kinsfolk. In June 1955 he had been in Kwanyama country where, with shells obtained at Luanda, he had bought cattle and for 15 of the *olomande* shells he got a sewing-machine. In the year 1955–6 (very roughly from the end of the dry season in '55 to the same period in '56) he had sold ten sacks of maize at 25 escudos each and six sacks of beans for 60 escudos each. He had, however, concluded that maize did not pay and had started to grow coffee. He had sold one beast for 900 escudos (£10. 15. 0), and had also sold ten sheep for 100 escudos (£1. 5. 0) each. He had also sold a coat for 120 escudos (£1. 10. 0).

The principal item of Kambungo's expenditure was a bicycle which he bought for 1,500 escudos (£18. 15s.). He had also bought two beds each 100 escudos, and ten plates 100 escudos altogether. He had bought ten bottles of wine, at 5 escudos each, and had also bought some indigenous rum, price not noted. Ten traditional sleeping mats cost 2½ escudos each, and four

[1] Quoted by Egerton, pp. 124–5.